

IMPORTANT WORKS OF ART OF THE
EARLY GHOLA PERIOD FR M
NEAR TANJORE
P. R. SRINIVASAN

ND-144-2031/8

Reprinted from *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of
South India*, 1956-57.

IMPORTANT WORKS OF ART OF THE EARLY CHŌLA
PERIOD FROM NEAR TANJORE

P. R. SRINIVASAN



12/57

IMPORTANT WORKS OF ART OF THE EARLY CHŌLA
PERIOD FROM NEAR TANJORE *

BY

P. 'R. SRINIVASAN

During the last week of January, 1956, I happened to visit Tanjore on official work which necessitated my stay there for over ten days. While the photographers of the Museum who accompanied me in this tour, were doing their work at the Tanjore Art Gallery, I could snatch some time and visit some of the nearby villages as well as the various outlying hamlets of Tanjore itself with a view to examine if these places contained any antiquities and works of art of importance from the points of view of history, art, architecture and iconography. The inducement for this investigation of mine was my belief that Tanjore which was the capital of the famous Chōlas should contain works of art belonging to periods earlier than the time of Rājarāja the great (985-1014 A.D.) although the various arts and crafts reached a high level of development under Rājarāja I due to the prosperity of the time and the great impetus the king himself gave to the workers in these fields. The fact that the rulers of Tanjore, should first of all try to encourage the activities of the people of the rich and fertile villages that are situated near the city before extending their patronage to far off towns and villages of their vast kingdom, was also another reason. Besides this, I was also prompted by the fact that during my visit to Tanjore in 1953, I had a hurried look round some of the streets on the outskirts of Tanjore where I found beautiful specimens of sculpture lying uncared for in the precincts of insignificant temples dedicated to village deities, some of which have subsequently been removed to the Tanjore Art Gallery. The places that I visited during my 1956 trip are the following:—Karuntaṭṭānguḍi and two or three streets beyond the eastern gateway of the fort at Tanjore, Kaṇḍiyūr, Tiruppūndūrutti, Tiru-ālampolil, Kumbhakōṇam and Śivapuram.

* This is only a part of the paper a gist of which was read at the meeting of the Society on 22-3-56.

1. *Pallava Sculptures in Tanjore.*

In the eastern extension of Tanjore are two temples both of them dedicated to the goddess Kālī. One of them is called Vaḍabhadrakālī and the other Ugramākālī (Skt. Ugra-Mahā-Kālī). Though the structures of these shrines are apparently insignificant, on examination, they are found to contain specimens of sculptures which are at once magnificent and interesting in more than one respect.

Of these the Vaḍabhadrakālī temple which faces north, enshrines an almost life-size stone slab on which is carved in bas-relief the figure of an eight-handed goddess. It has now a very thick coating of oil and dust which makes a study of its details difficult. Nevertheless a close examination of the figure will reveal that it is a representation of goddess Chāmuṇḍā in one of her most terrific aspects. The Chāmuṇḍā images of South India are usually shown as other aspects of Kālī but with this difference that here the figure will wear a *muṇḍa-mālā* (garland of skulls) and its hair shown flying on either side, in a schematic manner. And the Chāmuṇḍā figures of South India, unlike those from Kalinga and some other parts of India, are not shown in a skeleton-like form. But the image in question represents the goddess as a skeleton. Apart from this peculiarity, the figure is seen seated and trampling on five male figures. From the description, namely *pañcha pretāsanāsīnā*, *pañcha brahmendra madhyamā* (seated on the pedestal composed of the five corpses, etc.) occurring in the *Lalitā Sahasranāmā*, an aspect of the Goddess Lalitā, it is evident that representations of this aspect of the goddess should have been made and used for worship. But so far no specimen of this kind other than the image in question seems to have been found in Tamilnad. The rarity and the consequent importance of this figure is therefore obvious.

The sculpture gains additional significance when its date and artistic qualities are known.

A brief digression on the technique of the art of sculpture of ancient times may not be out of place here. It is well known that a great majority of examples of sculpture of India dating from the earliest historical times to about the 4th-5th centuries A.D., are in bas-relief, e.g., the sculptures of Bhārḥūt, Śāñchi, Amarāvātī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. There were also produced during this period a few free standing sculptures such as the Yaksha figures from

Pārkhām and Mathura; Yakṣhiṇī figure from Didarganj and the Buddha figures from Mathura, Amarāvātī and Nagārjunakoṇḍa. Though they appear to be in the round, they are in fact only examples of unsuccessful attempts at the technique of carving sculptures in the round; because if these are examined closely, they will show that they are flat, although not so much in front as in the back. The reason for the almost universal practice of the bas-relief technique in early periods was perhaps that it lent itself admirably for the carving of compositions and scenes of the various religious stories in a continuous narrative form. It may be remembered that almost all the early sculptures of India, whether Buddhist, Jain or Hindu, are of the narrative variety, intended to inculcate in the minds of the followers of these religions their ideals and doctrines in a telling manner.

The technique of bas-relief was continued also during the subsequent period, i.e. 5th to the 8th century, as exemplified by the famous sculptures of Deogarh, Mahabalipuram, Ellora, etc. But in these sculptures the method is seen to have attained the zenith of its development. It was also during this period that the technique of carving individual figures in very high relief became well established and a number of sculptures of classical quality were produced in this way, the famous examples being the standing Buddha from Mathura, the seated Buddha from Sārnāth, the Buddha figures of the early Pāla period, and the Śiva, Viṣṇu and other figures of the Pallava period in South India. From these specimens it is known that the technique of carving figures completely in the round did not yet become the rule with the sculptors. In North India most of the sculptures of the subsequent period were also done in the same alto-relievo method as exemplified by the majority of the Pāla sculptures, such as the famous sculptures of Padmapāṇi and Simhanāda from Mahoba, and the rare dancing Śiva figure from the Rajshahi district, although they give the impression of being in the round. In South India, on the other hand, this technique was perfected during the period when the Chōḷas were supreme. Magnificent sculptures done in this method may be found in the various temples belonging to this period as well as in the Madras Museum.

Returning now to the Chāmuṇḍā figure of Tanjore, it is in the characteristic bas-relief technique which was largely employed by the later Pallava *sthapatis*. Not only is the technique of it highly suggestive of its antiquity but its workmanship is also unmistakably akin to that of the sculptures of that period. Un-

fortunately there is no definite inscriptional evidence to prove this beyond a shadow of doubt. In spite of this difficulty the early date of this sculpture seems to get support by its association with a few equally early or probably earlier sculptures.

By the side of this Kālī temple is a Śiva temple. Though it is bigger than the former, it appears to have been renovated in recent time. Perhaps there are no endowments for its maintenance. It is now, therefore, in an extremely neglected condition. It seems that only once or twice a day worship is offered here. In spite of all these, that this temple should have been there for centuries is proved by a very early Dakṣiṇāmūrti sculpture which is also carved in bas-relief and which is now found in one of the dark cells to the north of the sanctum. It is a beautiful representation of the *yogic* form of the deity. This figure too is thickly coated with oil and dust, and hence its details are not easily seen. But in view of the fact that it is almost a duplicate of a sculpture from Satyamangalam, North Arcot District, now in the Madras Museum (which is illustrated here in Fig. 1) its iconographical details can be made out. They are as follows:

Dakṣiṇāmūrti is seated with both the legs kept erect by means of the upper garment which goes round them and the waist like a *yogapaṭṭa*. He wears a huge *jaṭābhāra*, *kuṇḍalas*, a single *hāra*, armlets and wristlets. The waist-band is shown falling between the legs in a graceful loop. Of the four hands the two upper ones hold the *paraśu* and the *mṛiga*(?); and the two lower arms are thrown over the knees. As regards the workmanship of the sculpture, it is in the style of sculptures belonging to about 750 A.D. The face is square and chubby, the limbs are slender and beautiful, the shoulders are broad and powerful and the torso is exquisitely carved. The fine modelling, the beautiful proportions, the supremely tranquil countenance, the great spiritual powers of the Lord suggested in a highly subtle manner and the excellent poise, coupled with the rarity of similar representations during later periods may be taken as proof positive for dating the figure to the beginning of the late Pallava period, if not earlier.

Apart from this Dakṣiṇāmūrti image another sculpture was also found just near the Kālī temple itself. It is not seen in full because it is buried almost completely. Its top-most part alone is projecting above the ground level. Perhaps the people who reside there and those who visit the temple have never noticed it to be

the head of a sculpture. When I was entering the *maṇḍapa* of the Kālī temple I too passed by it; but a little later noticing that the stone was tapering above, I went and closely examined. To my joy I found it to be the head of a sculpture. On close examination, the head could be identified as that of a *Jyeshthā* sculpture. Though unfortunately, it was not possible to excavate it and see, from the details of the head, it was easy to imagine the other qualities of the sculpture, which are characteristic of *Jyeshthā* images of the Pallava times. It looked to me that this figure was perhaps slightly earlier than even the Dakshināmūrti noticed above.

If this date of the sculpture is acceptable, then the existence of it quite near the Chāmuṇḍā sculpture clinches the issue that there was a temple to a goddess in this particular place dating from the early Pallava times and that when the temple of *Jyeshthā* fell in ruins, the people of the locality arranged for the building of the small shrine where they installed the Chāmuṇḍā image and began to offer worship to it.¹

Thus the significance of the above sculptures is very great because they serve as pieces of evidence of high authenticity to show that the art of sculpture had been flourishing in Tanjore itself from at least the Pallava times.

2. Early Chōla Sculptures in Tanjore

Nisumbhasūdanī, probably of Vijayālaya Chōla's time: Beyond the above temple, about a furlong's distance to the east, is the Ugramākālī temple which is also quite unpretentious in its form. Here were found by me in 1953 half a dozen or more beautiful pieces of sculpture, including the one representing the goddess Nisumbhasūdanī which turned out to be a very important image historically as will be shown below. Three or four of them from here were removed subsequently to the Tanjore Art Gallery, in the building adjacent to the Sarasvatī Mahal Library in the Palace area.

On a careful study of these sculptures, it was found that the Nisumbhasūdanī figure (Fig. 2) on grounds of style, was earlier in point of time than the rest. Its description is as follows:

1. Mr. J. M. Somasundaram, in his *Chōlar Koil Panigal*, in Tamil, p. 6, says that this figure may represent Nisumbhasūdanī, said to have been installed by Vijayālaya Chōla. In the light of our discussion, his ascription does not seem to be correct.

Together with the pedestal the height of the figure is about $4\frac{1}{2}'$. It is seated with the right leg bent and kept on the pedestal and the left leg hanging down. Below it is found a demon facing us and on the front side of the pedestal is another demon facing up, who is trampled by the left leg of the goddess. The latter demon holds a sword in his right hand and a shield in his left hand. The hair of the goddess is arranged in *jaṭābhāra* fashion and is decorated with flowers, etc. There is only one *hāra* on her neck, which is worked beautifully with tassels. A *nāga* serves as the *kucabandha*. A *muṇḍamālā* (garland of skulls) is worn in the *yajñopavīta* fashion. The figure wears upper garment on the waist, with a *simhamukha* knot in front and with gracefully curling bows on either side. *Pādasaras* are present in the ankles. Of the four hands, the upper right hand holds a trident in the attitude of piercing the demon below. The other hands are broken. The figure itself is broken into two at the waist.

The rendering of the various details of the figure is powerful. The expression is not awe-inspiring as is usually expected of such representations, and a subtle smile beams through the round face. It may be mentioned here that to invest the images representing the terrific aspects of gods and goddesses with pleasing countenance is characteristic of Indian art; and this method is resorted to for emphasising the fact of the transcendental divine character of the deities who revel when they are engaged in benign actions as well as when they have to perform the equally important destructive deeds. Especially noteworthy is the modelling which is superb and hardly excelled by that of any sculpture of its kind belonging to other periods. The excellence of its workmanship is enhanced by the tasteful decorative details which are kept under restraint which is another characteristic of the early Chōla sculpture.

Thus the sculpture was in all probability the product of a master hand; and that the master sculptor was prompted to do this not only because it was but natural for him to do so, but also because he wanted to please the person, who commissioned him to do so and whose encouragement of the sculptor was so personal and moving. The qualities of the sculpture are so distinct from those of the sculptures found along with it in the same temple, and from those of the sculptures of the time of Parāntaka I, Rāja Rāja I and his successors, that they clearly suggest a date, definitely earlier than 900 A.D. for the image.

It is known that prior to Parāntaka I the Tanjore region was under the rule of two great Chōla monarchs namely Vijayālaya and his son Āditya I both of whom were responsible for laying firmly the foundation of the vast and famous Chōla empire to be. It is also known that both of them like all other kings of the dynasty, were ardent devotees of Śiva. Of the two kings, Āditya I is said to have studded the banks of the Kāvērī with temples to Śiva, while no such claim seems to have been made in the case of Vijayālaya, although there is evidence to show that temples were built during his time by his feudatories, e.g., the temple in Melamalai, at Nārtāmalai, in Pudukkottai, which is significantly enough called Vijayālayachōlēśvara after the king. As Vijayālaya's own undertakings in this regard, we know from the Tiruvālaṅgāḍu copper-plate grant of Rājendra I, that one of the first deeds of piety of Vijayālaya, after gaining Tanjore from the Muttaraiyars and establishing his capital there, was to build a temple for the goddess Nisumbhasūdanī. It is true that this fact is known only from the 11th century inscription, it having not been attested to by any earlier document. But considering the meticulous manner in which the various details of the grant are drafted and the consequent importance of it for the history of the early Chōlas, it may be safely assumed that the record about Vijayālaya's founding a Nisumbhasūdanī temple was also not without basis. The question that arises is where was that temple and where was the image of the goddess which was made and installed therein during that king's time. No attempt seems to have been made so far, to trace them out, except for that of Mr. J. M. Somasundaram. But he surmised that the Chāmuṇḍa figure mentioned above was perhaps the Nisumbhasūdanī of Vijayālaya's time, which as we have said above, cannot be regarded as correct on grounds of style and iconographic variation as well as on other circumstantial evidence. In view of the various significant details of the Nisumbhasūdanī image of the Ugramahākālī temple, we propose to identify it as the one which in all probability was made under the orders of the great Vijayālaya Chōla.

It has been noted above that the images in and around the Vaḍabhadrakālī temple bear features characteristic of late Palava sculptures, and that the temple might have been in existence since then. On the other hand, the earliest sculpture in the temple of Ugramahākālī is the Nisumbhasūdanī which is earlier in date than the remaining ones found with it but later than those of the previous temple. It shows that the Ugramahākālī temple started

with the Nisumbhaśūdanī figure. This fact too seems to support our identification because it is quite likely that Vijayālaya founded a new temple as stated in the copper-plate charter mentioned above, dedicated it to the goddess of his heart and that too, at a place not far removed from the one where existed another temple dedicated to the goddess Chāmuṇḍa who was one of the favourites not only of the people but also of the rulers belonging to the earlier period. It is but natural that the conqueror, in order to prove his worth and usefulness to the people who had become his subjects, founded such a temple, at such a place. This is another significant circumstance which we can hardly ignore while evaluating the sculpture under discussion, and which was responsible for influencing the composer of the Tiruvālaṅgāḍu charter to record it.

Now that all the facts mentioned above go to strengthen that the image of Nisumbhaśūdanī belongs to Vijayālaya's time we may say that it is one of the very early specimens of sculpture of the beginnings of the imperial Chōla period.

Other sculptures in the Ugramahākālī temple: These include a Durgā, Mohinī, Gaṇēśa, and Gaṅgādhara, all badly mutilated. The last is now in the Tanjore Art Gallery. This group of sculptures belonged definitely not to the small temple of the goddess mentioned above but to a comparatively large temple to Śiva which originally stood in the neighbourhood. But no vestiges of this temple are found now there.

Durgā. The figure (Fig. 3) is carved in high relief on a granite slab. The goddess stands in the graceful *ābhanga* pose on a buffalo head which, although much of it is broken now, is depicted in a naturalistic manner. Hair is arranged in a frizzling fashion (but broken now) with curls falling on the shoulders, two or three necklaces adorn the neck. *Channavīra* is found on the chest. *Keyūras* and *valayas* on the hands, lower garment is worn as shorts; the upper garment is tied to the waist with its ends forming beautiful bows and hanging down on either side, and with a central loop shown between the legs. There is also the beautifully worked knot in the waist-band. *Pādasaras* are present. The figure is shown as usual with eight hands. Of the four right hands, the front one is broken and missing, the other three hold the following, in the order from above, namely, a conch, a long bow, and a shield. That the goddess is an archer who could discharge arrows with both hands (like Arjuna) is beautifully suggested by the sculptor by depicting a quiver behind each shoulder. Sur-

rounding the head of the figure is an elongated oval *prabhā* fringed with three-pronged flames, the form of the halo being characteristic of the early Chōla times. On either side of this halo is found a *chauri* worked in the usually fine manner like the *chauris* that are depicted on the seals of the copper-plate grants of the early Chōla kings.

Unfortunately the breasts and the face of the figure are also broken; but the attempted restoration of them by means of cement has spoiled the beauty that can be found in such sculptures even when mutilated. Nevertheless the exquisite workmanship of the figure is apparent. Its classical qualities are easily seen from its fine proportions, slenderness of modelling and delicate but restrained decorative details. Only on these stylistic grounds it has been said above that this and the other figures may be later than the Nisumbhasūdanī image.

Mohinī. It is similar to the above sculpture in workmanship although iconographically there is a lot of difference between them. In this sculpture, there are only two hands and the hair is arranged in the beautiful *dhammilla* fashion. As an example in nude study, this may be said to be a fine one.

Gaṅgādhara. The sculpture (Fig. 4) is in alto-relievo and shows Śiva in company with his consort Pārvatī, both standing. He is represented in the attitude of pacifying Pārvatī. The reason for this attitude of Pārvatī was that she attributed to Śiva the motive of entertaining Gaṅgā, wantonly on his locks of hair although the reason for Śiva doing it was to quell the pride of Gaṅgā. It is well known that when Gaṅgā was descending to the earth from heaven, in order to wash away the ashes of the sons of Sagarā and to emancipate their fallen souls, she was so haughty as to entertain the idea of washing away the entire world, in the process. Knowing her mind Brahmā advised Bhagīratha to pray to Śiva to come to the rescue of the world which was granted by the Lord. Hence Śiva bore Gaṅgā on his matted hair where she was lost. To release her from there, Bhagīratha had to perform penance once again. It is this aspect of Śiva that is represented in this sculpture, but with the difference that here the story is depicted according to its developed form where Śiva was suspected of misdemeanour to her by Pārvatī. Consequently he had to pacify her. This is what is shown here.

Śiva is standing with a slight bend to the left suggesting that he is turning to Pārvatī who is shown on his left. He wears a

high *jaṭāmakuta* with a depression at its bottom, a feature usually met with in early sculptures. Above the forehead is a beautiful *paṭṭa*. The third eye is seen on the forehead; *patrakuṇḍala* in the left ear and *makarakuṇḍala* in the right ear are found. *Keyūras* and *valayas* are seen on the arms and wrists. There is a broad necklace and a long garland of beads on his chest. It may be mentioned that this garland may represent the *rudrākṣhamālā* which is invariably met with in all the representations of Śiva. Three-stranded *yajñopavīta* with a prominent knot on the left chest is also found. Elaborately worked waist-band with the characteristic *simhamukha* clasp is beautifully carved on the waist. The *uttarīya* is shown going round the waist twice, gracefully looping in front. The lower garment consists only of shorts. Of the four hands the two left ones are broken and missing. The upper right hand is held in the posture of holding aloft a strand or two of matted hair suggesting the reception of Gaṅgā on them. Hence this gesture has become a characteristic of Gaṅgādhara icons. Above the hand is seen a mermaid in *añjali* who is none else than Gaṅgā herself. The lower right hand is also unfortunately broken. But the scar, if we may call it so, left behind by the mutilation is nevertheless enough to show the sculptor's mastery in depicting the gesture of Śiva's pacifying Pārvatī, by turning gently her chin to himself and whispering to her the truth about the affair involving Gaṅgā.

Pārvatī is represented according to the requirements of *Śilpa* texts, with height which reaches to Śiva's shoulder. Her hair is dressed in the form of *kuṇḍai*. There are *patrakuṇḍalas* in the ears, broad *hāra* on the neck, beautifully swaying sacred thread on the torso, *keyūras* etc., on the arms and a finely carved band on the waist. The upper garment is tied also to the waist, one of its ends being shown tucked in a realistic manner. The lower garment is so fine that it clings to the legs. It shows tassels just below the ribbon-like *uttarīya*. *Pādasaras* are present. There are two hands; the left hand is bent at the elbow and shown touching the left shoulder. The right hand is shown as if taken away from coming into contact with Śiva. This, coupled with the subtle bend at the waist is highly suggestive of the strained *bhāva* (feeling) of Pārvatī due to her wrong presumption. But that her anger vanished, like mist before the sun, immediately after Śiva's whispering to her the truth of the matter is also suggested in a subtle manner by means of the gracefully smiling expression on the face which is, as if accentuating this, tilted just a little towards

Śiva. Here is found the proof positive for the dexterity of the sculptor who could effectively show in his masterpiece two states of mind simultaneously, a thing which cannot be expected in life itself. The expression in the face of Śiva is also one of smiling which can be interpreted as indicating his happiness over the appeasement of Pārvatī's wrath. Thus this sculpture is, from all points of view, an extremely interesting one.

When examining this sculpture, a few words about the representations of the theme in South Indian art during different periods may not be out of place. The earliest extant representation of this theme is the famous Gaṅgādhara sculpture occurring in the upper cave at Trichinopoly, attributed in the "royal artist" Pallava Mahendravarman I. In this panel, however, the scene of Śiva's receiving the divine river is given prominence and not his act of pacifying the angry Pārvatī. But from about the early Chōla period, the latter story seems to have caught the imagination of the people and consequently the Sthapatis and Śilpins began to give greater importance to this story, relegating the former scene to the background. Since then it becomes a mere symbol. This was continued with added vigour in the subsequent periods also and the theme in the modified form came to be represented frequently in stone sculpture and bronze as well as in painting. A remarkable representation of the theme occurs amongst the early Vijayanagar frescoes at Lepakshi, in Anantapur District.

3. Sculptures at Karuntaṭṭāṅguḍi

Karuntaṭṭāṅguḍi, popularly known as Karandai is situated at a distance of about a mile and a half to the north of Tanjore on the Tanjore-Tiruvaiyār road. It is an ancient village. The most important of temples there is the Śiva temple dedicated to Vasishṭheśvara. It is interesting not only for its architectural details but also for a series of sculptures that adorn the outside of the walls of the sanctum.

The central shrine containing the *svayambhu liṅga* is the oldest structure of the temple complex. It is surrounded by a wall on the inside of which is a verandah all round. The wall has an opening on the eastern side facing the temple tank, and another on the southern side, facing the village proper. In front of the central shrine and facing the southern entrance is the shrine of the goddess. This and the *prākāra* mentioned above are later additions, and they are therefore not of any consequence for us.

The main shrine consists of, as usual, of the *garbhagriha* and the *ardhamandapa*. The superstructure above the sanctum has a storey topped by a bulbous capital. Hence it is a specimen of an *ekatalaprāsāda*. The style of this structure is very simple, which is characteristic of a great majority of the temples belonging to the early Chōla period.

On the walls of this shrine are found very interesting sculptures, which are noteworthy both as specimens of the art and as examples of iconography. Amongst them are found two, representing two of the four important Śaivite saints. These seem to be of great historical interest too. As these are fitted against the walls they are not carved completely in the round but only in high relief.

Naṭeśa. Of these, *Naṭeśa* (Fig. 5) is a beautiful specimen of its kind. It is also important because, occurring as it does in the temple which may be taken to belong to about the middle of the 10th century, it is one of the earliest representations of *Naṭeśa* in the *bhujangatrāsita karaṇa*, also called *ānanda tāṇḍava Naṭeśa*. Every one of the details of this figure is of interest and has been done in an exquisite manner. Unfortunately its nose, left hand and left leg are mutilated. Its description is as follows:

It has a round face with eyes, eyebrows, the third eye on the forehead, the lips and the chin and the ear lobes are worked very beautifully. There is a naturalistically carved thick garland of flowers going round the head. The hair is shown spread out in eleven strands of *jaṭās* on either side of the head. The beauty of the swaying rhythm of the *jaṭās*, is enhanced by the fine curls shown at the end of each of them. On the head are shown the head of Gaṅgā (?) in the left, a grinning skull in the centre and the *Dātura* flower on the left. It may be noted here that Gaṅgā in the form of a mermaid is introduced on the *jaṭās* in images of later times. Above, there are shown peacock feathers which are delicately carved, a feature not commonly met with in figures of this kind. The crescent moon is not visible. Another interesting detail found on the head is the knot of a strip of cloth probably employed to tie the garland of flowers mentioned above. The manner of its carving is so nice as to show its ends and bow fluttering gently about. There are two *hāras* of beads on the neck. The arms are adorned with crossed bead garlands held together by a fine clasp. This is also a peculiarity which is to be found only in some images of the period to which group this *Naṭeśa* belongs. On the wrists are

kaṅkaṇas and the fingers are beautified with rings. Of the four hands the upper right hand holds gracefully between its thumb and middle finger a kettledrum executed in an extremely fine manner. The lower right hand is in the usual *abhaya* pose. The upper left hand is shown carrying a flame, which is in the form of a beautiful little conch, resting gently on its top. This feature changes as time passed. The lower left hand is broken, as mentioned above. But there is no doubt that it was held in the *kari-hasta* pose, pointing to the raised left foot. Here, however, is joined an interesting detail introduced by the ingenious sculptor. On this arm is found a thick wavy line which is nothing but the tail of a serpent. As the fore-arm is broken the other parts of the serpent are not to be seen. But fortunately for us, the hood of the serpent is preserved beyond the knee of the raised left leg. As the lower left hand extended to about this knee, it is likely that the serpent was also carved on the hand, its head hanging below as in the examples of Nāṭeśa from Ellora and Aihole. This came to be shown in the right hand in *abhaya*, only in later images. Hence this detail too confirms the early dating of this figure. There is a thick stomach-band and the loin-cloth carved distinctly and there are dots on it suggesting probably that it is of the hide of a tiger in accordance with the *Silpa* texts and the *Devaram* hymns (cf. பொன்னூர் மேனியனே புலித்தோலை அரைக்கிசைத்தது). The upper garment is tied on the waist in the form of two belts and its two ends are fluttering beyond, charmingly. There is a *pādasara* on the ankles of the right foot which is planted on the Apasmāra Puruṣa who is shown here as a beautifully worked dwarf crouching under the weight of the Lord. The dwarf is holding in his left hand the other serpent which is said to have fallen from the hand of Nāṭeśa. As regards the artistic qualities of this figure, the modelling may be somewhat plump but its lines, the light-and-shadow effect displayed here and the highly restrained but tasteful decorative details are such as to make the figure a superb specimen.

At the bottom of the panel on either side of the planted right leg are carved in miniature a few interesting figures. Four of them are on the right side of Nāṭeśa and two on the left side. As the raised left foot is broken the figure carved just below it is not preserved completely. But enough remains to show that the figure represented was that of Nandi. Below this is found a two-handed figure seated cross-legged, keeping between the legs an interesting three-faced pot-drum, a variety of Tamilian drum

called *kuḍamulā* which is being played upon by the figure. In the description of the dance of Śiva, Viṣṇu is mentioned as having played the role of a drummer. As the figure in question has only two hands and no marks of Viṣṇu are to be found associated with it, it is difficult to identify it. But it may be possible that it actually represents Viṣṇu, without his attributes, simply as any ordinary drummer. To the left of this drummer is carved the figure of a goddess in skeleton-like form probably Kālī as may be identified from the *jaṭāmaṇḍala*. She has four hands: the upper right hand holds something which is not clear, the lower one is held in *abhaya* pose; the upper left hand is in *daṇḍa hasta* pose while the lower left is held in the *varada* pose. There is present *kuchabandha* and other ornaments and garments. The goddess dances the *lalita* mode of dance the charm of which has been effectively brought out by the disposition of the legs.

There is, on the corresponding opposite side, another skeleton-like figure of a goddess, probably also of Kālī. She has the *jaṭā-bhāra* etc., and four hands, and is performing the *bhujāṅgatrāsita karaṇa* like the Lord himself, but with this difference that while the Lord holds a flame in the upper left hand, the goddess holds her upper left hand in the *daṇḍa hasta* fashion. This figure is rather disproportionately carved compared to the other figure. The occurrence in this composition of two figures of Kālī in two different modes of dancing is puzzling. It is reasonable to expect a single figure of dancing Kālī as it was due to her challenge that Śiva entered into a dancing contest with her. Probably both the figures represent one and the same deity in different stations displaying two different modes of dancing. This method of depicting a person twice in a composition is called synoptic method. It was extensively employed by sculptors of ancient times. Numerous examples of this method can be cited from the sculptures of Bhārṇūt, Śāñchī, Amarāvātī and Barabudur. If this identification is accepted, it is of interest to note the persistence of ancient artistic traditions through centuries, although slowly they were modified beyond recognition. Conversely this feature gives a clue to the date of the entire composition; the earlier a figure is, the greater is its affinity, in technique and details to definitely known ancient sculptures. It may be mentioned that there is significance in showing these two figures in the back-ground. May be this device has been adopted by the sculptor in order to show the defeat of Kālī and the triumph of Śiva. If so, the genius of the sculptor is indeed marvellous as the significance of Śiva's victory

cannot be depicted in plastic form better than in this way. In view of the fact that the period to which this figure is assigned was also the period when the grammar of the *dhvani* school of rhetoricians was perfected, there is no wonder that the Śilpāchārya has caught the spirit behind the *dhvani* type of *kāvyas* and has made use of it in his immortal work, naively and effectively.

Below the second Kālī and carved prominently in the foreground is a kneeling woman with skeleton-like form. Her hair is dishavelled and breasts loosely hanging. These suggest the emaciated condition of the person depicted. The person represented here is apparently the famous woman saint of Tamilnad namely Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār who is frequently referred to in the *Devaram* hymns as one who by her extreme penance and devotion to the Lord had the rare privilege of witnessing the Lord's dance in person. Owing to this fact, her figure is found, as a rule, depicted both in sculptural and pictorial compositions of the dance of Śiva only in the early examples, the figure of Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār having been dropped from such compositions belonging to later times.

There is one more figure to be noticed. It is that of the dwarf carved between the seated drummer and the Apasmāra Purusha. The dwarf is shown seated. He wears a thick ribbon-like *yajñopavīta* (probably *vastrayajñopavīta*) and is playing on a flute. In the Naṭeśa panels a dwarf of this kind is usually introduced; and it is said to represent Tanḍu the famous Rishi who was responsible for the propagation of the Nāṭyaśāstra. The figure in question may be taken as a representation of the sage.

A word about the composition of the panel. Great prominence is given to the figure of the Lord while the other figures are carved so very small in size that they do not attract the attention of the beholder. But in spite of their small size, each one of these figures is executed with a consummate skill. In the case of Naṭeśas from Bādāmi, Aihole, Ellora and Kāñchīpuram, there are more subsidiary figures, all of which are carved more prominently. The reason for this feature is that since they are nearer in date to the more ancient schools of sculpture which specialised in bas-relief works where equal prominence is given to all the persons in a composition or scene they also preserve to some extent the ancient traditions although by their time the ideas of iconography had developed so much as to compel the sculptors to give prominence to the hero of a scene and to relegate the others, taking part in it, to the back-ground. The Naṭeśa

figure in question being later than those from Bādāmi etc., is still further removed from the ancient schools and their traditions. Hence here the rest of the figures are greatly subdued. Nevertheless depiction of these figures within the frame of the panel itself is an indication of the persistence of traditions of art of more ancient times. In the later examples some of the figures usually associated with a particular scene are dropped out and the rest shown not in the panel itself but outside of it as, for instance, in the Naṭeśa from the Big temple at Tanjore. This was the culminating point at which attention was bestowed only on the central icons. In still later times, the subsidiary figures came to be omitted altogether. Now the relative chronological position of the Naṭeśa under discussion will become apparent.

Bhikshāṭana. To the right of the Naṭeśa figure, in another niche is found a sculpture group representing Bhikshāṭana (Fig. 6) going about for alms and a woman, probably a Rishipatnī, giving alms. The perfection of treatment and modelling of these figures is evident in each of their limbs, and their magnificence becomes apparent even at a glance. No doubt the details of workmanship clearly show that it is also the work of the same *sthapati* who did the Naṭeśa figure. But there appears to be a slight difference between these two in so far as their modelling and the treatment of the flexions are concerned. In the Naṭeśa figure, the modelling, as we have said above, is slightly plump; and the *bhāṅgas* are a bit strained. These are probably due to the fact that *sthapati* had gone wrong, to a small extent, in planning slightly a larger figure than he could carve out of the slab successfully without the defects. In the case of the Bhikshāṭana group the sculptor had apparently overcome the temptation to carve a larger figure and had planned to suit the size of the slab perfectly. The freedom that he had now in this figure had brought about all the difference between these two figures, and the Bhikshāṭana, therefore, throbs with life and movement, and may have to be considered on that account as a greater masterpiece than the Naṭeśa. Fortunately this is not mutilated except in its nose.

The figure of Bhikshāṭana is shown in a slight *bhāṅga* with the face carved in more than three-quarters profile. The beautiful rhythm of the slow motion of Bhikshāṭana is suggested by the sculptor, in a masterly and brilliant manner, by the slight bend of the head to the left, by the forward thrust of the hip and the charn

ing flexion introduced at the knee of the right leg, which necessitated the lifting of the back of the right foot slightly. This is easily seen by the line running from the tip of the crown to the end of the raised right foot. The grace of this curving line is beautifully emphasised by the gently undulating sway of the ribbon-like *yajñopavīta*, a clever and apt device that can be conceived and executed only by a master sculptor.

On the head of Bhikshāṭana there is a bejewelled *jaṭāmakūṭa*, studded with the usual skull, *Dātura* and crescent moon. In the case of late images of the deity, a *jaṭābhāra* is usually seen. The *jaṭāmakūṭa* of this figure is an indication of its early date. The features of the face are executed with dexterity and skill. It is noteworthy that there is no *kuṇḍala* present in the ears although in the representations of the various aspects of Śiva, a *patrakuṇḍala* is invariably found in one of the ears, more frequently in the left ear. A long garland of beads gracefully adorns the neck; armlet and *kañkaṇas*, similar to those seen in the Naṭeśa, a ribbon-like *yajñopavīta* (*vastrayajñopavīta?*). The shoulders and chest are deftly executed so as to bring out at once the great qualities of the Lord namely supreme power and transcendental majesty. As if to subdue the overwhelming effect that might be produced if the shoulders are left bare, the intelligent sculptor has introduced a gently curling strand of hair on each shoulder. The modelling of the sides and the stomach is indeed superb. Of the four hands the upper right hand holds the small drum and the rendering of this is obviously realistic. The lower right hand is in *lola hasta* pose and is engaged in fondling the young gazelle that is shown gracefully jumping to lick the fingers of the Lord. The upper left hand is engaged in holding an exquisitely worked *chāmara*. The lower left hand holds the alms-bowl. To this forearm clings a serpent the hood of which is hanging down in a beautiful hook. He wears a loin-cloth which has beautiful floral and leaf patterns on it which are probably introduced to suggest that the garment is of tiger-skin. Although Bhikshāṭana figures are more often shown as nude, here is shown another variety of the same icon. Another serpent serves as the waist-band for the Lord. The skilful manner of tucking the tail-end and the beautiful sway of the rope-like portions of the serpent are interesting studies. There is a *pādasara* composed of *kiñkīṇis* (small bells) on each ankle. The foot-wear called *pādaraksha* is also artistically designed, and is probably made of *svarna*. It may be mentioned in passing that copper-gilt *pādarakshas* almost similar to these have been obtained

from treasure-trove finds and are preserved in the Madras Museum. By the side of the left leg of the Lord a dwarf is shown. He carries on his head a big bowl probably intended to keep the surplus alms collected by the Lord. With the bowl on his head the height of the dwarf is only upto the Lord's knee. He wears big *patrakuṇḍalas* in his ears, a thick *kaṇṭhī* and a broad *yajño-parvīta*. The most interesting feature of this figure is the demon's face carved on his belly (Fig. 7) which makes the figure a beautiful and interesting example of *Gaṇas* of the *udare mukha* variety. It must be noted that representations of this class of *Gaṇas* have always been few even amongst sculptures from such places as Amarāvati, Sāñchi, Bādāmi and Bhārḥūt. They become very rare after about 1100 A.D. The occurrence of this type of *Gaṇa* here is therefore significant as it shows unmistakably that the sculptor who did this was perpetuating ancient traditions as he was nearer to the age when they were very popular.

On the right stands a woman. She is only half of the size of *Bhikṣhāṭana*. She wears her hair in the manner of a *koṇḍai* which is here shown artistically on the left side. Moreover, her head-dress is adorned with flower garlands carved beautifully. There are *ratna kuṇḍalas* in her ears, a series of *hāras* on the neck, *channavāra* in the body, *keyūras* on the arms and *valayas* on the finely chiselled and the carving of the hanging ends of it is tasteful. There are waist-bands or *ratnas*. The *uttariya* too is wound round the waist with a charming curve in the middle. A *pādasara* of *kiṅkīṇis* is found on each foot. With her projected right hand which holds a spoon (?) she is offering alms to the Lord who has taken the rôle of a mendicant. Her left hand is hanging down in the *lola* pose. The facial features of the figure are obviously expressive of *vismaya* (wonder) at the sight of the *divya manohara vigraha* (resplendent and lovely figure) of the Lord. Her feeling naturally makes her bashful; and she therefore shrinks a bit as is characteristic of family women. The genius of the artist has indeed been remarkable as he could conceive of this subtle and significantly characteristic feeling of women on such occasions and delineate it so effectively by means of the slight forward bend of the torso. His figure, as stated above, most probably represents a *Ṛṣhipatnī*. It will now be evident what a remarkable piece of sculpture it is, in spite of the fact that it is primarily of interest iconographically.

Liṅgodbhava. In the central niche of the back wall of shrine, is found a *Liṅgodbhavamūrti* in the characteristic early Chōla style.

Kaṅkālamūrti. On the north wall of the shrine there are three interesting sculptures, namely, *Kaṅkālamūrti*, *Kālārimūrti* and *Durgā*. As the image of *Durgā* is of the usual type, it is left out and the rest are noticed below.

Of these, *Kaṅkālamūrti* (Fig. 8) is fixed in a niche which appears to have been specially scooped out to receive it, whereas the other sculptures, occurring in this temple, are fixed flush with the wall. He has a high *jaṭāmakuṭa* with the usual emblems, with an additional detail of serpent on it. The fillet on the forehead consists of circular jewels. A *patrakunḍala* on the left ear and a *makarakunḍala* on the right ear are seen. A big *kaṇṭhī* with a large jewel in its centre and a loosely hanging garland of beads adorn the neck. The *yajñopavīta* is bejewelled and bears a clasp from which two ends of the strands hang. There are *nāgas* winding round the arms and a *valaya* of beads instead of *keyūras*; and *kaṅkaṇas* are found on the wrists. There are four hands of which the upper right hand holds a *ḍamaru*, the lower one is held in the posture of touching the waist-band; the upper left hand is holding a single-hooded serpent while the lower left hand is shown holding a staff topped by a corpse-like figure. The loin cloth has a free end which is shown as flat in front and falling between the legs. The two waist-bands are also of jewels with a tassel hanging from the centre of the lower one. There is an anklet on each ankle. The figure wears *pādarakshas* which are worked differently from those of *Bhikshāṇa*.

It will be seen that the details of decoration of this figure differ considerably from those of the two figures discussed above. Besides, the figure is apparently a little disproportionate. Though the *jaṭāmakuṭa* on the heads of Śiva figures may be conspicuous, here it is very much exaggerated. The modelling of the torso and the limb is also not upto the mark. On these grounds of stylistic differences and on the ground of its being found in a niche, perhaps specially made for it, it may be said that this figure is later than the previous ones, although not very much later. Nevertheless, there are present in this figure, the qualities such as restraint in embellishment and expressive facial features, of early Chōla sculptures. The fact of its being made and introduced later may indicate that either there was a figure already here, although it is not known what it represented, but perhaps, a *Kaṅkālamūrti* for which the present one is a substitute, or it was newly put in in order to satisfy the desire of a powerful person, probably, a king who

wanted to fill up the blank spaces on the walls with sculptures representing some more aspects of the Lord.

Kālārimūrti. The next sculpture (Fig. 9) represents Śiva as *Kālārimūrti*. This is also of frequent occurrence among Chōla sculptures, as those described above. But as specimens of sculpture belonging to various periods and different localities, each is of importance in that, though the subject matter is the same, its conception and execution differ according to the genius and capacity of the *sthapatis* who actually produced them.

The figure wears a high *jaṭāmakuṭa* with the usual emblems on it. There is a more ornate fillet round the head. *Makara kuṇḍala* and *Patra kuṇḍala* are present in the ears. The face is almost square in form and has features suggesting an ironical smile. A thick cluster of necklace adorns the neck. The *yajñopavīta*, unlike in the above mentioned figures, is in three strands and has a more elaborately worked clasp. The *udarabandha* is also ornate. On the arms are *nāga valayas* which are different from those of *Kaṅkālamūrti* in that here the hood portions have been worked as leaf designs. *Valayas* are seen on the wrists. Of the four hands, the upper right hand, which is kept low here, holds the trident (*triśūla*) the prongs of which show certain details which are characteristic of the tridents of Pallava times. The lower right hand is held up and is engaged in brandishing the *paraśu* in the posture of striking at the figure of *Kāla* or *Yama* shown below. The upper left hand is perhaps in the *vismaya* posture, the Lord wondering at the audacity of *Kāla* who, forgetting for the moment that the Lord is *Kālakāla* (supreme *Kāla*) put his noose around Lord's *chinha* of *liṅga* also. The lower left hand is in *sūchī hasta* pointing down to *Kāla* beneath. The usual loin-cloth and simple waist-band are present. Legs are kept wide apart with a bend at knee portions suggesting violent action. *Kāla* (*Yama*) is carved on the pedestal, in the posture of having fallen on his left side and facing us. His hair is shown as if flying. The posture of his right hand held pointing to the Lord above, and the dismayed expression of the face are clearly indicative of his acceptance of utter defeat and helplessness before the Lord. It may be of interest to refer to a similar oft-repeated Buddhist theme namely *Māra's* defeat at the hands of the Buddha where too exactly similar situations occur and feelings come to play. To the right of *Kālāri* is a miniature panel showing the teen-aged *Rishi* *Mārkaṇḍeya* firmly clinging to a *Śiva-liṅga*. Though the panel is small and the

figure of the Rishi is not quite distinct yet the sculptor was careful in delineating the feeling of complete surrender to the Lord of the boy-sage by means of calm facial features. While discussing the Nāṭeśa sculpture, we have referred to the tendency to relegate completely to the background such panels as the one under discussion or to dispense with them altogether, from the time attention had begun to be bestowed more and more on iconography where the images of the Lord alone predominate than on the depiction of stories in a continuous narrative form. Here it is more in evidence than in the Nāṭeśa composition.

This feature coupled with the fact that the details of this figure are more developed than even those of Kaṅkālamūrti is proof positive that the sculpture is later than the Kaṅkālamūrti. That the size of this figure is small compared to that of the previous three figures may be an additional point in dating it to a later period, because if it was coeval either with the Kaṅkālamūrti or the other two, then the *sthapatis* who did them would have made this also of similar proportions. Besides these, its style itself is akin to that of the sculptures found in the Big temple at Tanjore rather than to that of the three sculptures discussed above. Notwithstanding this fact the workmanship of the figure, especially above the waist, but for the slightly over-tilting of the *jaṭāmakūṭa*, is exceedingly fine and the dynamic movement which should be inherent in such figures is remarkably brought out by the sword-brandishing-hand and the legs kept in the posture of running.

This sculpture too presents a problem namely, if this is later than others, why and how it was introduced here. A solution to this is not easy. Perhaps there was no figure at all at the place where this is found; or there was a figure of Kālārimūrti here which was broken and mutilated necessitating its replacement by the present one. The latter of the two reasons seems more probable.

Nānasambanda and Appar. Besides the above mentioned sculptures, there are in the temple, representations of these two important Śaivite saints. These are also carved in high relief and introduced in spaces formed by pilasters, to the left of the Nāṭeśa figure, on the southern wall of the shrine.

The figure of Sambanda (Fig. 10) is done in the three-quarter profile with the right side facing the spectator. Hence only partly the left side of the figure is visible, the left hand and shoulder being almost out of the picture. The head seems to be shaven except for the suggestion of a small tuft in its centre which is shown

in front. The face is oval. It is tilted a bit to the right and hence it looks up a little. The eyes and lips are expressive of solemnity rather than joy. There is a garland of beads round the neck, an armlet on the arm and a *valaya* on the wrist. The hands are engaged in playing on cymbals which are a characteristic attribute of Sambanda. The gesture of playing on them taken in conjunction with the tilted head is significantly suggestive of the great event in the life of the saint namely his having begun to sing, immediately after Pārvatī had suckled him, his immortal *Devarams*, couched in elegant and sweet Tamil, in praise of the ultimate one in the form of eternal couple. There is a waistband of two strands the ends of which are carved realistically, as falling on the right thigh. Just a piece of cloth (*kaupīna*) is worn by him to cover his private part. The legs and feet are simple in workmanship.

Appar is represented frontally (Fig. 11). Here too, the head is shaven but a garland of beads is carved on it. The face is oval and its features suggest seriousness. Here also, as in Sambandar, a long garland of beads, *valayas* etc., are found. But here Appar holds a spud, his characteristic attribute, in his left hand. The right hand is held in the *chinmudrā* pose, which, viewed together with the seriousness of the face, clearly indicates the spiritual self-analysis in which the saint was engaged since he became a convert to Śaivism from his early faith of Jainism. The nipple is prominently seen and it is a characteristic feature of early sculpture. There is only a single-strand waist-band intended for tucking in the small piece of cloth called *kaupīna*. The knee-joints are distinctly worked here unlike in Sambandar. Compared to the Sambandar figure, workmanship of this figure is bolder. The clean-cut face, the broad and well-shaped shoulders, the beautifully modelled torso and thighs are intended most probably to suggest that the saint was aged. On his left thigh is a representation of a *līṅga* probably located under a tree of which the branches are seen to the left of the head of Appar. The Sambandar figure is, on the other hand, suggestive of his boy-hood. In other details both of them agree. Their style is unmistakably the same as that of the Nāṭeśa and the Bhikshāṭana sculptures.

When these figures are accepted to be contemporary with the shrine itself they become important in more respects than one. Though representations of Chāṇḍikeśvara, one of the Śaivite saints, are known from the Pallava times, figures of other saints do not appear to have been carved on the walls of early temples and

therefore the present figures are probably the earliest known examples of this practice. Subsequently from the inscriptions of Rājarāja I, it is known that the practice of making metal images of the most important Śaivite saints was in vogue in his time. Secondly at the time when these figures were made, the practice of the *sthapatis* was to carve them draped only with a *kaupīna*. During subsequent periods there was vacillation between this practice and the practice of showing the saints draped from the waist to knees. A number of examples, in the latter fashion are known. A few of them in metal may be found in the Madras Museum. Thirdly the gestures of the two figures are also noteworthy. The *sthapati* of these, while delineating their gestures, might have been guided by the traditions relating to them which were current then and which, not being far removed from the time when the saints lived, were more dependable and authentic. The later-day examples of these figures are done in a variety of gestures.

The most interesting and important thing about these figures is their bearing on the question of the date of Sundaramūrti-nāyanār the third member of the famous Dēvāram Triad. Controversies were raging over the date of Sundaramūrti. Recently an eminent Tamil scholar has assigned him to the first quarter of the 9th century. If this is accepted then, after this date till we come to the inscriptions of Rājarāja I, referring to the donations of metal images of the saints made to temples, and the paintings of the Brihadīśvara temple where scenes from the story of Sundaramūrti are depicted, there is a long period during which no figures of Sundaramūrti, either in sculpture or in painting, seem to have been made. On the outside of the plinth portion of the innermost gopura of the Tiruvannamalai temple, belonging to about the last quarter of the 11th century A.D. there are figures, of all the three saints, two of them carved on the right side and the third on the left side, of the entrance. From this it is clear that by the eleventh century the practice of carving figures of these saints on temple walls had become common. When, therefore, there are the bold representations of only Sambandar and Appar in this temple dated about the middle of the 10th century A.D., and situated at the capital of the Chōlas, who were ardent devotees of Śiva, and who had great respect for the saints, should we take that Sundaramūrti, whose figure is conspicuous by its absence here, had not become famous then? Or was Sundaramūrti then alive? Or would that be that he lived only after the building of this

temple? We have said above that probably these sculptures of Sambandar and Appar are amongst the earliest examples of their kind. If so, the time that had elapsed between their date and the date of their representations in sculpture here is very considerable. But that their fame was widespread even from their life-time itself is corroborated by such literary references as the one referring to Sambandar occurring amongst the writings of the great Śankarāchārya. On this analogy, the absence of the figure of Sundara from this temple, should not be taken to prove that either he was contemporary with the building or that he was born after it was built. But it is to be taken as proving the fact that at that time, popular feeling which permitted the carving of the images of the two other saints who were dead and gone centuries earlier, was against the introduction of a figure of Sundara who, inspite of his learning and saintliness, was only a man of yesterday, i.e. who lived about a century or so back. Later on, after about a century, his figure too was carved along with those of the other two, on the temple walls.

From the foregoing examination of the sculptures in the temple, its importance is clearly known. It is more or less a small gallery of sculptures where specimens of the art of more than one school are found side by side. It admirably aids a comparative study of them. And the existence of the figures of the two saints brings out clearly the fact of the comparative obscurity of Sundaramūrti at the time when this temple was built.

Not far from this temple, on the bank of the canal, was found a sculpture representing Brahmā.² It (Fig. 12) is nearly life-size and is now in the Tanjore Art Gallery. In fact the Gallery came into being only on account of this image. It is not known how it happened to be at the place where it was found. There are no vestiges of any shrine. Most probably it was originally in the precincts of the Śiva temple noticed above, just as in the case of Brahmā images of Kaṇḍiyūr.

Brahmā is seated on a beautiful *kamalāsana* in the *sukhāsana* posture. There are four heads with a common *jaṭāmakuṭa*. The features of the face are suggestive of profound meditation. Gem-set *makarakuṇḍalas* are seen in the ears. There are a gem-set *kanṭhī* and a *muktāhāra*. The *yajñopavīta* is also of pearls and is

2. For other similar Brahmā images see *Rupam* Nos. 35-36 July, Oct. 1928, pp. 29-30.

worked delicately, showing clasp and tassels in a beautiful manner. A gem-set broad *udarabandha* is also found. Of the four hands the upper right hand is broken and it is not therefore known what was there. Perhaps there was the *charu*. The lower right hand should have held a lotus bud which is broken. The upper left hand carries an *akshamālā* while the lower one which is in *varada* pose is placed on the thigh. The florid *keyūras* and the jewelled *kañkaṇas* on the arms are noteworthy. The lower garment is worked only upto the knee. There is the *uttariya* shown with beautiful loop which is shown on the pedestal. A very fine *simhamukha* clasp is also seen here. A *pādasara* adorns each foot. The back view of the figure (Fig. 13) shows certain interesting details. No doubt the back is also as beautifully done as the front, and the tucking in of the end of the *kaccha* of cloth is also fine. Some attention seems to have been bestowed on the *yajñopavīta* too. But the rest of the details are not so carefully worked out as on the front side. It is quite evident in the *udara-bandha*. Though this kind of treatment of the back-side of sculptures is characteristic of specimens of modern period (i.e. after 1600), from this Brahmā image, it is seen that it is an old practice.

It is apparent that as a work of art it is a wonderful specimen except for the slightly defective proportions of the left fore-arm and generally of the part below the waist, although the *padmāsana* is elegantly done. It may be mentioned here that in a good many early examples of sculpture the tendency to concentrate attention on the bust has been marked; and here it is justified because the portion that really matters in such seated figures is that from the head to the waist. From the close affinity of the style of this figure with that of the Nisumbhasūdanī, discussed above, this may be said to belong to the latter half of the 9th century, if not earlier. The existence of this image of Brahmā here and two similar ones at Kaṇḍiyur which are remarkable for their size and style of workmanship, may not be without significance. Such large images in the round, were made to serve as *mūlaberas*. It is not known whether in the present instance, these images were installed in separate shrines or in subsidiary shrines which formed part of large temple complex like the Vijayālayachōleśvara. Anyway one thing seems to be clear that worship of Brahmā was in vogue in and around Tanjore at the time of the foundation of the Chōla empire, it having fallen into disuse later on.

4. Conclusion

In the foregoing pages, we have tried to draw attention of scholars to the following facts.

First, the existence of sculptures in Pallava style at Tanjore itself shows that even prior to the time of the imperial Chōlas, there was here an active school of sculpture. In this connection it will be useful to remember the examples of architecture and sculpture of Mahendravarman I's time at Tiruchirapalli which is only about 30 miles west of Tanjore, as well as inscriptions of late Pallava kings namely Tellārerinda Nandipottaraiyar³ and Ko-Vijaya-Nṛipatuṅgaṅgavikramavarman,⁴ at Tillaisthānam and Kaṇḍiyūr respectively, places which are situated at about 5 or 6 miles to the west of Tanjore.

Secondly, the rare and very early image of Nisumbhasūdani found at Tanjore has been taken to be most probably, the image of the goddess for whom, Vijayālaya, the first king of the imperial Chōla dynasty, is said to have erected a shrine, soon after his becoming the king of Tanjore. If this is accepted one more landmark becomes known of the time of Vijayālaya.

The architecture of the temple of Vasishṭheśvara at Karuntaṭ-ṭānguḍi is interesting as it is earlier than the Big temple at Tanjore. The sculptures of this place are extremely interesting. For instance the Naṭeśa, Brahmā and Bhikshāṭana are superb specimens of their kind. But the most interesting sculptures are those representing Sambandar and Appar. They are probably the earliest representations of the saints. The absence of Sundaramūrti from this group raises the interesting problem of his date. We have come to the conclusion that Sundaramūrti must have lived more than a century before the time (i.e. about the middle of the 10th century A.D.) when the representations of Sambandar and Appar were allowed to be included on the walls of the temple.

That there were people specially devoted to Brahmā is taken to be known from the magnificent representation of the God, now removed to the Tanjore Art Gallery. This view may be said to get support from the existence of similar Brahmā images at Kaṇḍiyūr and Tiruvaivāru.*

3. M. E. R. No. 52 of 1895.

4. M. E. R. No. 17 of 1895.

*I am extremely grateful to Dr. A. Aiyappan, Superintendent, Government Museum, Madras, for his encouragement and kind help in the preparation of this article.



Fig. 1. Dakshināmūrti.



Fig. 2. Nisumbasūdani.



• Fig. 3. Durgā.



Fig. 4. Gangādhara



Fig. 5. Nāṭeśa.



Fig. 6. Bhikshātana.



Fig. 7. Dwarf by the side of Bhikshātana.



• Fig. 8. Kankālamūrti.



Fig. 9. Kālārimūrti.



Fig. 10. Sambanda.



Fig. 11. Appar.



Fig. 12. Brahṃā. Front view.



Fig. 13. Brahṃā. Back view.

